



# Do-It-Yourselfers

## What to Do if You Find Vermiculite or Asbestos In or Around Your Home or Business

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### Vermiculite in and near Homes and Businesses



Vermiculite was used in a variety of forms for decades in homes as a soil additive, lightweight aggregate for concrete, and attic insulation, among other things.

If vermiculite is present, it might contain a very toxic form of asbestos from a vermiculite mine in Libby, Montana. Exposure to Libby Asbestos could lead to such serious diseases as mesothelioma, asbestosis, and other pleural maladies. Asbestos-containing vermiculite might be found in walls, home foundations, attics, crawlspaces, and other relatively inaccessible areas. It also might be found in yards and gardens.

Some encounters with vermiculite will be small in volume, such as a handful, and might include:

- **minor renovations**, such as removing old carpets, installing ceiling fans, or removing wall outlets
- **minor landscaping**, like rototilling or mowing

There may be times when a large pocket of vermiculite is discovered, for example:

- **intrusive digging**
- **major renovations** - taking down walls, putting in windows, etc.
- **building fires** - fire-fighting and subsequent cleanup

### Protect Yourself

If you encounter vermiculite, it is likely that you will be exposed to Libby Asbestos. Hire a licensed asbestos inspector to determine if the material contains asbestos. Call a licensed asbestos removal contractor to clean up vermiculite spilled while working on your home.

### Take Steps to Avoid Exposure

1. For a small indoor quantity, such as a handful of vermiculite, use a damp paper towel to scoop up the material into a sealable plastic bag or jar. Then use another damp towel to wipe down the area. Place the used paper towels in the container and throw everything away in a proper receptacle. For a small quantity of vermiculite in soil, such as a very isolated area or a few random flakes, it is recommended that you wet it and try to work around the area. **If possible, leave it alone.** If the material is buried, keep it that way - it's better buried than at the surface.
2. HEPA filter vacuum cleaners are effective on small quantities of vermiculite indoors. **Never vacuum vermiculite with a regular vacuum cleaner.** HEPA vacuums and wet wiping can be used periodically to remove small amounts of vermiculite introduced into your home. Use a HEPA vacuum to remove dust from previously inaccessible locations such as under recently removed carpets, appliances, and furniture.
3. For larger quantities of vermiculite, such as what you may find in a breached wall, do not disturb the material. **Do not vacuum large amounts of vermiculite - even with a**

**HEPA vacuum – leave the material alone.  
Call an asbestos removal expert immediately.**

4. Dry mowing or rototilling in yards and gardens where vermiculite is abundant might cause asbestos to become airborne. Water your yard or garden before mowing or tilling.

If you encounter a large amount of vermiculite in soil, **do not disturb the material. Call a licensed asbestos removal expert.**

**Renters** - You have a right to know about any adverse conditions at your rental. Ask your landlord about the presence of vermiculite.

**Libby Asbestos might be considerably more toxic than other commercial asbestos products. It should be avoided or handled with extreme care.** The health risk from exposure to **all** asbestos depends greatly on the amount of asbestos in the material you are disturbing and how long the exposure lasts. If you take the basic precautions outlined in this fact sheet, work on your project will be much safer.

## Whom Can I Contact With Questions About Asbestos?

### Federal Internet Web Pages:

EPA: [www.epa.gov/asbestos/](http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/)

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov>

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA: ) <http://www.osha.gov>

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH):  
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html>

### Phone Numbers:

EPA's Asbestos Ombudsman: 1-800-368-5888  
EPA's Asbestos Hotline: 1-800-471-7127



**Raw and Popped Ore**

5. If you are planning on remodeling your home, find out if there is vermiculite in the attic or walls or in any other material that will be taken out, disturbed, or is likely to create dust. **Call a licensed asbestos removal expert.** You should also be aware of specific state and local regulations regarding remodeling, demolition, and disposal that may impact your work, especially on big projects.

Most states have laws requiring that employers hire a licensed inspector to determine if asbestos is present before doing any work. Most states allow only licensed asbestos removal experts to remove it. Asbestos that is not associated with the Libby vermiculite mine is still regulated by the states. If any asbestos is found, no matter what type, it should be dealt with according to state regulations. Contact the state asbestos program for more information.

- **Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Asbestos Program Information:**  
303-692-3100  
<http://cdphhe.state.co.us/ap/asbestos/>
- **Montana Department of Environmental Quality/Asbestos Control Program:**  
(406) 444-5300  
<http://www.deq.mt.gov/Asbestos>
- **North Dakota Department of Health, Asbestos Control:** 701-328-5188  
<http://www.health.state.nd.us/AQ/IAQ/ASB/>
- **South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources/Asbestos Program:**  
(605) 773-3153  
<http://www.state.sd.us/denr/des/WasteMgn/Asbestos/ASBpage1.htm>
- **Utah Department of Environmental Quality/Asbestos Program:** 801-536-4424  
[www.airquality.utah.gov/HAPs/ASBESTOS/index.htm](http://www.airquality.utah.gov/HAPs/ASBESTOS/index.htm)
- **Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality,**  
307-777-7584  
<http://deq.state.wy.us/out/outreachfaq.htm#Asbestos>